

THE MESSENGER



OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA

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CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA (White Sisters)

ORIGIN AND AIM: The Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa was founded in 1869 by Cardinal Lavigerie, to rescue, moralize and regenerate the pagan and Mohammedan woman, and through her attain the family and society. Exclusively vowed to the Apostolate in Africa, the Sisters devote their lives to the natives in every work of mercy and charity . . . Catechetical, Medical, Educational.

GOVERNMENT AND APPROBATION:

The Congregation is governed by a Superior General who depends directly on the Holy See. The Constitutions were definitely approved by decree the 14th of December 1909 and promulgated on the 3rd of January 1910.

SPIRIT: The Spirit of the Congregation is one of obedience, humility, simplicity, and zeal; and the life of the Sisters one of poverty, mortification and labor.

* * * *

The Congregation numbers over 1,500 Professed Sisters who are devoting their lives to the Natives in 120 Missions, that spread out through—

North Africa: Algeria, Tunisia, Atlas Mountains, Sahara.

West Africa: The Gold Coast, French West Africa.

East Africa: Kenya, Nyassaland, Tanganyika, Uganda, Rhodesia, Belgian Congo, Rwanda, Urundi.

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SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES

Three Masses are said monthly for the living and deceased benefactors of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Moreover, they share in the prayers and apostolic labors of over fifteen hundred White Sisters, who are working in the African Missions; and in the prayers and acts of self denial that the Natives, so willingly, offer up daily for their benefactors.

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In the Light of the Gospel

MAMA AUGUSTINA died the 14th of February at Kala, a mission situated on the shore of the great Lake Tanganyika. I would like to tell you the story of this native sister.

The White Sisters Visit Sumbawanga

One day in September, 1900, five White Sisters destined for the foundation of Kirando, camped near the large village of Sumbawanga in the mountains of Ufipa, the residence of King Kapufi. Young and old alike came to see these virgins from Europe for they had never seen any white women before and excitement ran high. But the old women, fearing no doubt that the young girls would follow the sisters, forbade them to approach the tents.

But curiosity triumphed over fear and three children of about ten years of age presented themselves before the sisters. One of the three was Princess Ngalou, of royal blood, with the right of succession to the throne as queen. The sisters, overjoyed with this unexpected visit, received them cordially and showed them everything in which they might be interested. There was no conversation as the children spoke only Kifipa and the sisters knew only a few words of the native language of Kishwahili. At their departure the sisters gave each several cookies.

But now, as they thought of their audacity, they were afraid. They didn't dare eat the cookies for fear of being bewitched and were even more afraid of showing them to anyone because of their disobedience. So they buried them in the ground.

This was the first meeting of Princess Ngalou, who later became Sister Augustina, with the White Sisters.

The Influence of the Vicar Apostolic

Time passed and Monsignor Lechaptois, Vicar Apostolic to Tanganyika, was often seen at Sumbawanga, where he was received with all the honor accorded to the king himself. The princes and princesses looked on him as their father because King

Kapufi had made a blood pact with Bishop Charbonier, the first Vicar Apostolic. The kindness of Monsignor Lechaptois won the hearts of all who knew him, but little Ngalou was drawn to him even more than the others. Through this friendship Ngalou conceived a great love for the Catholic Faith and asked permission to go to Karema to be instructed.

Now this required a great deal of courage. No member of the royal family was allowed to see the lake, much less sail on its moving waters, and Karema being on the opposite side the only way to get there was by boat. The princess was afraid, and once she saw she was on the water, closed her eyes tight. But she remained firm in her decision and was the first to break one of the oldest Wafipa traditions.

Once with the sisters, she applied herself with ardor to the study of Catechism, and after the two years spent as a Catechumen, she was baptized and received the name of Augustina.

Princess Ngalou Enters the Convent

But her heart had been enraptured by a higher ideal. The Vicar Apostolic had founded a native congregation, "The Daughters of Mary," and Augustina asked to be admitted. She, who had been accustomed since birth to be waited on with the respect due to a princess, was willing to renounce

(Please turn the page)



The beginnings of a new mission station.

all that and to live with her companions as one of them sharing their work and way of life.

During her noviciate, which lasted two years, she gave complete satisfaction to the Mistress of Novices and on the 25th of December, 1910, she pronounced the vows which bound her to God and to the Congregation. She, a mistress and queen, promised to obey, and that, for all her life. Accustomed to having everything she could desire, she vowed to be poor and chaste and would remain a virgin in a country where virginity was as yet unheard of.

Fidelity of Sister Augustina

She has worked successively in the missions at Karema, Mwazye, and Kala.

In 1931 she bound herself by perpetual vows being one of the first of the native sisters to do so. She remained faithful until death in spite of all the obstacles she encountered and the many defections she saw around her. On December 25, 1939, she celebrated her twenty-fifth Anniversary in the religious life, the first in the Congregation to do so.

She never spoke a harsh word to her companions; they loved her and were edified by

her example and strove to outdo each other in helping and honoring her.

Her favorite task was to prepare the smallest children for their First Holy Communion. As they gathered around with eyes fixed on their beloved teacher, she would teach them Catechism with remarkable patience. Because of the zeal of Mama Augustina, as they affectionately called her, there were many who were privileged to receive Our Lord when only six years of age and as yet as pure as the angels.

When a child was not able to come to her because of the bad condition of the road or bridges, she would go to the chief of the village to make arrangements and was always obeyed. In illness she would care for them as a mother, visiting them and bringing medicines and fruit. She also enjoyed caring for her sick companions rendering them every possible attention with humble devotion.

Death of Sister Augustina

Toward the end of January a high fever struck her and in a few days she was dying. On the 4th of February when asked if she would like to receive Extreme Unction, she acquiesced with joy.

She sat up in bed and presented her hands

(Please turn to page 8)



Native African Sisters now co-operate with the White Sisters in the education of youth.

The Missions March On

Bwanda, Uganda.

Last December twenty-six African girls joined the "Daughters of Mary," the Native Sisterhood of Bwanda, Uganda. The same day nine Novices were professed, so that the Professed Nuns now number three hundred and seventy.

These Sisters are working on their own (without any European Sisters), in forty stations and a forty-first is to be started shortly.

Sixteen girls and three Native Sisters recently obtained their Teacher's Diploma. Two of us (White Sisters) accompanied them to Kampala as a reward and to give them an experience they had never had. How they enjoyed it! We spent a night at Rubaga Mission; visited the site of the Pyre of Namugongo, where the Uganda Martyrs laid down their lives in 1885; and later visited the King of Uganda's palace. As etiquette requires, they were presented to King Mwanga's own sister. (Mwanga was the king who had the Uganda Martyrs burnt to death.)

On our way back, on the third day, a bad storm overtook us and as a car broke down causing considerable delay, it would have been risky to proceed as we had to go through some open country where wild animals roamed at night, so we decided to make for Nkozi Mission instead of heading for home.

We reached the Mission at 8 p. m. (it is dark at six in those parts) and what a welcome we had! The natives shouted their joy—and yet there were twenty-three of us thrust unexpectedly on the Mission for the night, and breakfast had been our last meal! . . .

Next morning we were at Bwanda quite safely.

Sr. Michel des Saints, W.S.

Save, Rwanda.

Recently we have had the first Mass of a Native Priest, a boy from our mission. They were twelve to be ordained on the same day. In a week the Native Sisters are having their retreat, it will be held at the Novitiate. At the end of it we shall have Silver Jubilee celebrations for two Native Sisters. The first five already had their Jubilee a year ago. This Congregation now counts two hundred members, and how we wish it could be dou-



Archbishop Streicher, W.F., under whose guidance the "Banabikira" were founded and developed, passing from the status of a diocesan Congregation, to that of a Congregation approved by the Holy See.

bled. The Mission is developing at a rapid pace, we are too few, and some of us are not young any longer.

Sr. M. Ephrem-Joseph.

Nasso, Ivory Coast.

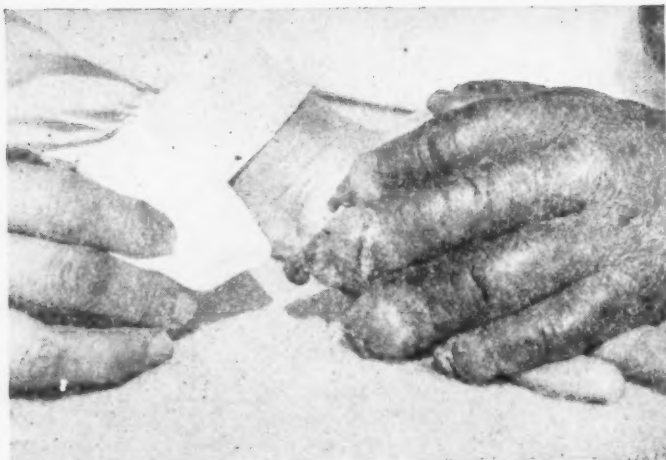
On December 8, 1948, eight postulants received the habit in the Congregation of the Annunciation for Native Sisters from the Vicariate of Bobo-Dioulasso. A ninth postulant developed leprosy and had to exchange the Novitiate for the Leper Settlement.

Mother Jacqueline, Provincial.

Djikoron, Ivory Coast.

Marie Anna arrived here from Nasso in July. What a sacrifice to leave the Novitiate, so we tried to make life at the Leper Colony as easy as possible. When she arrived she hoped to be cured and then become a postulant again; but the Doctor has declared she must give up the thought, as she will be a leper for life. It is then she told me what follows. His Excellency Bishop Dupont before telling her from what sickness she was suffering had asked: "What would you prefer, commit a venial sin or have leprosy?" And she had answered that she preferred leprosy . . . Now that God has taken her to the word, she regrets nothing, says she, because a venial sin is a greater woe than leprosy . . . Doubtless so magnanimous a soul will draw many blessings on the others, who are not up to her level. I was quite concerned about Anne Maria at first, who is here like "a lily among thorns," but she remains firm and imposes on the others by her circumspection and modesty, and she knows how to ward off indiscreet persons.

Mother Paul-Miki.



Hand in hand the
White Sister hopes to
lead her dear Lepers
to know and to love
God, here on earth,
and to heavenly bliss
forever.

WE LEFT ALGIERS by air and arrived at Nairobi, via Tunis and Cairo. A long wait, and then to Beira from Mombasa, by sea, calling at Daressalaam.

The train journey from Beira to Limbe took over a day, and after a half a day's walk we reached Mua (Nyasaland) on April 21st. What a joy to see White Sisters once more in the midst of real African scenery: a narrow path edged by very tall grass—some branches across a small stream—grass covered roofs emerging from maize or banana plantations and scores of brown faces smiling a "Moni Amai" greeting or just staring at the new comers with those enamel eyes of theirs.

Our time being rather limited we managed to have a glance at the Leper Settlement. What struck me most was the cleanliness and order of the place, nothing repulsive or dismal; everything seemed to be going on normally as in any other village. Of course a good number of the lepers are not contagious and can lead a fairly normal life with their families; many have their own garden where they grow maize and vegetables, others who cannot walk or work easily are busy weaving mats and baskets which they can sell. Everybody looks quite happy.

A certain number are contagious and practically helpless. A portion of the village is set aside for them and some women cook their food. In the midst of the huts are the church and a little school. They have Mass two or three times a week and can visit Our Lord whenever they wish. Two Sisters come down every morning from the Mission. One has charge of the dispensary and the other cares for the lepers, giving injections most of the time. Quite a number have been cured or at least much improved.

Both Mua and Ntakataka are by Lake Nyasa, but Bembeke Mission where we were to go next, is right up on the mountain and there is no other way but to climb a fairly steep slope. We left at about 6 a.m. to avoid the heat. The porters had already set off with our trunks on their heads. It was a real mountain path stony and steep, winding all the way. About half way we stopped to have a good look down; we could see the plain, the lake shining in the midst of deep green vegetation and another mountain range on the opposite side of the lake. It was magnificent!

Bembeke, with mountains all round, is an ideal spot. The heat is never intense there as it is on the plain, in fact it felt rather cool after our climb. Five White Sisters are in charge of a Boarding School with about 180 pupils as well as a Training College for Native Teachers, a large day school, a small dispensary and the Novitiate for Native Sisters with seven Novices and five Postulants.

Bembeke girls being rather placid, work is not always easy where intellectual exertion is needed, and the Sisters are expected to make all the necessary effort for them.

After two days at Bembeke we went to Likuni where there is another Boarding School for Girls. Of all the mission buildings we had seen so far, Likuni looked poorest. A few rooms had cement floors but the others were just roughly tiled. There were no ceilings except in the chapel; in the other rooms tree trunks replaced beams across which reeds had been strewn. It was also the worst place for white ants.

Home Sweet Home

May 1st. Mingo at last! Just as poor as

Along the Way to Minga

Likuni, just as attractive! . . . or rather more so since it is now my home.

Minga means thorns. Just in front of the house there are some low prickly shrubs with small red flowers, they are the perfect image of Minga: thorns and flowers, flowers on thorns . . . for Minga is not one of those flourishing mission-fields with crowds of eager catechumens, with churches full to overflowing, with its own priests and nuns. Minga is a rocky soil on which missionaries reap but a scanty harvest and where the seed is sown among thorns; bad habits, indifference, superstition, love of money . . .

After twenty-five years, the heroic foundation days being long past, there is one scarlet bloom upon the thorny bush, for missionaries can feel the thrill of kneeling under a dark hand raised in blessing, of watching the African Priest attended by the European lay-brother, of humbly waiting for those black fingers bringing the White Host—truly a flower among thorns. The Missionaries who led to its budding knew heroic days when they could open virgin hearts and souls to the splendors of God; the days of eager response from youth not yet spoilt by so-called civilization. Missionary life nowadays has lost much of its romantic halo. Those among the pioneers who experienced the dangers of soul-hunting among barbarian tribes sorely regret their younger days. Yet to this generation also Christ commands: "Go and teach all nations."

Missionary life is a true, living reality, for as the Church is a living Church, She is

bound to develop and grow unceasingly and to adapt herself—in a word, to Live, yet remaining the same for ever. In the same way our activities are very different from what they used to be fifty or sixty years ago; what was undreamt of in those days is an urgent necessity today. Education is spreading so rapidly to the remotest villages of Africa that we must catch up with it if we wish to sow the good seed where the enemy has already dropped the cockle. Girls must now receive as good an education as boys, and although we may never have dreamt of it, we find ourselves spending hours over fractions, botany and the intricacies of English grammar.

Asenga youth, as a rule intelligent and eager to learn, is taking more and more to education, but for girls it is harder than for boys. Girls are so useful at home: when seven or eight, even younger, they can already carry the baby brother or sister and thus free the mother for heavier work; later on they are useful in the fields. They help their mother to collect maize or ground nuts, or just frighten away the monkeys; at home they help to pound maize, to sift the flour and to clean the hut. It is hard on the black mama to see them leave for nine consecutive months at school. Besides a Boarder's life has so few attractions for those used to the freedom of the bush, to the joys of rat-hunting, to sleeping snugly by warm embers in a well closed hut . . . and so new-comers often run away at the beginning of the term

(Please turn the page)

Physical Education
has its place on the
African curriculum.



How a Reputation is Kept

PERHAPS YOU have never heard of Sidi Hamed, so I will tell you something about him. Sidi Hamed was a sorcerer, at least he enjoyed the reputation of such. He was feared more than respected by all the Arabs of the oasis. Whether he was a real sorcerer, I do not know, but he was certainly a cunning fellow who exploited the ignorance of those he met. Then, everyone knew, that Sidi Hamed had a castle in which there was a strong room full of treasures. But it was a favor, granted only to his greatest friends to visit this collection.

Sidi Hamed had travelled much in Europe and each time he had brought back some quaint object to add to his treasures. Also he was quite unscrupulous, if he wanted money, he took every means to obtain it.

Here is an incident showing how he went about things: One day he invited a group of friends for a midnight ride in the Sahara saying he would provide them with a good cup of hot coffee. The three friends set off with Sidi Hamed; the night was cold, and after galloping some miles across the moonlit desert, he called for a halt.

They all got down, squatted huddled in their burnouses, near their camels. Sidi Hamed took a strange looking object from the cowl of his burnous and placed it mysteriously beside him. Then followed a long chat, after which every one began to feel sleepy and none too warm.

At last Sidi Hamed picked up the object and said to his friends: "Now then, how much would you give me for a cup of hot coffee?"

"Oh!" replied the Arab, "one dollar."

"And you," said Sidi Hamed to the second man.

"I'd give you one dollar and fifty cents!"

"And you," he asked the third.

"I'd give you two dollars," was the reply.

"Very well," said Sidi Hamed, "get out your money, and you shall have your cup of coffee, hot coffee, at once."

The three men, rather bewildered, obeyed.

Then Sidi Hamed took the strange object, unscrewed the top, and poured out four cups of hot coffee.

Each man in his turn drank the coffee, hardly able to believe that out of such an innocent looking object, hot coffee could be had, after it had been exposed to the cold for many hours. None of them had ever seen a thermos and this Sidi Hamed knew. He had brought it from one of his visits to Europe,

Along the Way to Minga

(Concluded)

or when harvest time draws near. But those who have already been some time in school, the older ones who really wish to get on, who have learnt to know the Sisters, and love them, those are the hope of the future. They will live their Faith and show others by their example what it is to be a Christian. And yet, God knows what courage they may require seeing in what kind of atmosphere most of them will have to spend their lives. The evil effects of the war are felt even out here and they have not helped to improve matters. A Christian girl may still have to put up a hard fight and God will surely be more merciful to them than to us who have not experienced the horrors of a pagan environment.

A Single Blossom

One of our boarders, baptized just a year ago, has asked not to go home but to spend her holidays in another mission teaching in the village school, because her relatives—all pagans—want to prevent her coming back here when school re-opens. They want to marry her whereas she wishes to do Standard VI and then to train as a teacher. She hopes, after that, to enter a Native Sisterhood. By then she will be of age and free. Meanwhile, according to native custom, she should follow the dictates of her relatives. We are praying that God may help her to realize her plan for she is a lovely girl in every respect.

More and more girls now wish for emancipation from native laws, but, as they themselves say—it is the old men and women, the guardians of the old customs, who make things so difficult for all.

Old pagans spoiling the work of missionaries, putting obstacles in the way of Truth—

The older generation of Christians, devoted, strong and generous—

Educated youth wanting to do little and earn much—

Young people yearning for a fuller development through education—

Such is Minga, land of flowers among thorns.

Minga, Rhodesia

Mother M. Annelly

and although it was destined to join his collection of "treasures" he did not see why he should not make some money out of it first.

Returning home, the men were more than ever convinced in their hearts that Sidi Hamed was a real sorcerer.

Sister Mary Gwendoline, Rivet, Algeria

MY FIRST

AHUNTER KILLED A LION out in the wilds of East Africa, more by accident or chance than anything, for he was a rather poor shot. From that day onwards on every possible occasion the feat was related under the title of "My First." It even went into print.

In the end the story palled on his hearers. Like the friends of "Old Zip Coon" they were thoroughly bored but had no foreign shore to ship him off to.

One evening during a repetition, with trimmings, of the thrilling adventure, one of his listeners had an idea. When the narrator stopped he said: "But the end of the story, my friend. You have not finished it." The hunter was nonplussed; the audience clamored for an explanation. "It was also his last," was the reply. The story of "My First" never again appeared.

Missionaries too have their "First;" but it is rarely their last. They hunt also but not big game and their First is a far nobler prize: A Soul regenerated by the waters of Baptism.

One night I had gone to bed as usual and five minutes after "lights out" was fast asleep. A loud banging at the door aroused me. What was it? Two girls from the orphanage to say that a newly arrived baby seemed to be dying. The Sister in charge of the sick said to me: "Hurry up! There's your chance. You can baptize him." In five minutes we were on our way. My heart was beating so hard that I could hear little else. My companion's voice seemed miles away. The girls at the orphanage were waiting for us. They had a blest candle lighted and a cup of water ready. We knelt round the little bed. One glance at the child showed that it had very few hours to live. I poured the water and said the words: "I baptize thee, Francis," etc. What a joy! Before going home I whispered a message into the little one's ear for someone up above whose name he now bore.

An hour later "My First" had left this valley of tears and entered into "the joy of the kingdom." The little black pagan of an hour ago was now a little white soul in heaven.

Since then I have baptized several others and each time I have asked their Guardian Angels, in return for my services, to remember me in my hour of need.

Some of our Sisters, or perhaps I should say many of them, have baptized a hundred and more. One at least can claim to have opened heaven to over two hundred and fifty. A whole procession to meet her at the other side. What would one not give to be in her shoes! And yet this is only one of the incidental joys of a Missionary's life. Helping to form a Christian nation holds many others just as dear.

Sr. M. Bride
(then at Bwanda, Uganda).



The Nursery at Bwanda.

In the Light of the Gospel

(Concluded from page 2)

and feet to be anointed, offering her life for the mission, her country, and for the royal family of whom many were still in the darkness of Islamism.

She suffered patiently and silently and we believed she was improving. She received Holy Communion every day and on the 10th and 11th of February she was allowed to be up a short time. But the following night the fever returned, and as the Priest was bringing her Holy Communion in the morning, she lapsed into her last agony. She lingered on for three more days unable to say a word but made a sign that she could understand what was said to her. Many times during the agony we recited the prayers of the dying. The priest renewed the absolution and applied the indulgences for a happy death. We thought each instant would be her last. Then a half hour before Saturday, Our Lady came to get her child and take her to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Last Tribute Paid to Mama Augustina

Immediately we dressed Mama Augustina in her religious habit and placed her in the large parlor. From then on until 9 o'clock, the time of the funeral mass, the Christians came in crowds to pray beside her. Because of the tropical climate the dead are not kept very long.

Reverend Father Superior and two Native Priests, both Wafipa, her subjects and members of her family, came to accompany her body to the Church which was as crowded as on Sundays. After the Requiem High Mass, her last remains were laid to rest in the mis-

OBITUARY

Reverend H. Decorte, Brother Claude, Brother Gaspard, Brother Crepin, of the Society of the White Fathers of Africa.

Sister M. Albertine, Sister M. Daniel, Sister M. Hieronyma, Sister M. Elcoo, of the White Sisters.

Mrs. R. Carroll, Belmont Mass.

Mrs. Mary Sullivan, Jersey City, Guild Member.

sion cemetery, next to one of her Sisters, who died here in 1922. Everyone wanted the honor of carrying her so that at every few steps new men would slide in to take another's place, one more proof of how much Mama Augustina was loved and respected by all.

While praying that her soul may enjoy the reward of Eternal Life, we like to believe that from Heaven Mama Augustina will obtain for her people the light to know the True Faith and the strength to follow it so that they may all be brought under the sweet reign of Mary, the Queen of Africa.

Mother M. Rose de Lima, W.S.*

*Since writing this article, Mother Rose de Lima, W.S., went to her reward in the course of 1948, after forty-nine years of religious profession as a missionary sister, of which she spent forty-six among the Africans of Tanganyika. She too now rests in the cemetery of Kala. R.I.P.

"There are mothers who have the soul of a priest and who have given this soul to their son. May there be also many mothers with a missionary soul to pass on to their child."

— Rene Bazin

WILL

Our Legal Title Is

THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA
METUCHEN, NEW JERSEY

Don't forget the missions in your WILL! You will never regret it, now nor later. Why not include this clause?

"I hereby bequeath to the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa for use in their African Missions, the sum of Dollars."



As MOTHER M. LORETTA takes leave from our Metuchen Community, after nearly nineteen years of devotedness behind the lines . . . , we know she will be accompanied by the good wishes and prayers of all our Benefactors and Friends, especially of the many with whom she was personally acquainted.

On the above picture, when Mother M. Loretta saw a group off to Africa, she stands first to the right. Now she herself is on the way to our "Promised Land." Her new mission will be Tabora in Tanganyika Territory, B.E.A. We hope that Mother M. Loretta will be guest in our columns from time to time.

ATTENTION GIRLS

Do You wish to become a Missionary in Africa?

For Information Apply to:

Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

R. R. 2

Belleville, Illinois.



Mother M. Patrice (now Superior of our Convent, in Belleville, Illinois) with her pupils in Minga, Rhodesia. In cynianja, the native language of Rhodesia ZIKOMO means THANK YOU.

***Joining our dear little Africans, it is a very grateful
THANK YOU, that we wish to express to ALL our Benefac-
tors, Guild Members, Catholic Daughters and Friends for
their generous charity in alms, prayers, and sacrifices,
which sustained our efforts in extending God's Kingdom
in Africa.***

GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

